



The distribution of teaching and learning resources in California's middle and high schools



Institute of Education Sciences

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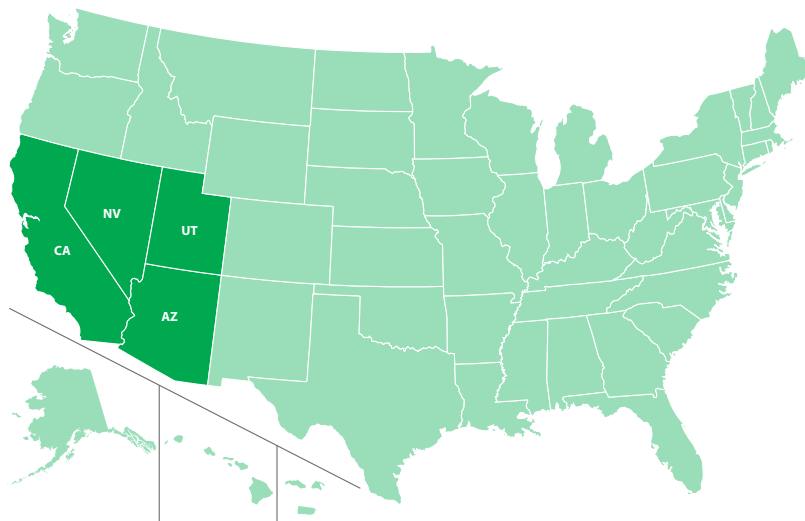
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Summary

The distribution of teaching and learning resources in California's middle and high schools

Access to important educational resources in California's middle and high schools is not equal among schools that serve different student populations. Overall, the most disadvantaged populations of middle and high school students are likely to have the least access to the resources necessary for learning.

Students in schools with the highest concentrations of low-income students or English language learners are more likely to have a less experienced teacher or a teacher not authorized to teach that subject, and they are less likely to be enrolled in courses required for admission to the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems.

Despite the general pattern of unequal distribution of certain teaching resources, only limited differences in distribution are associated with student race/ethnicity. For example, in foreign language and social science the schools with the highest concentrations of African American students did not experience as drastic a difference in out-of-field instruction as they have in the past. In contrast to prior research that indicated much more unequal patterns for schools with high concentrations of minorities, this suggests that some progress may have been made on one front. In addition,

aside from the expected trend of smaller classes in smaller rural schools, class sizes do not seem to vary greatly by type of student population.

The persistent disparities in the distribution of teaching and learning resources should not be ignored. Better answers are needed for why these patterns persist despite the time, effort, and resources devoted to the issue. The small differences identified in this report may suggest areas for further research. For example, to what extent can district policies and teacher union contracts explain the relationship between teacher inexperience and schools with high concentrations of low-income students? Why is more out-of-field teaching found in schools with higher concentrations of low-income students? Why is much more out-of-field teaching found in middle schools than in high schools? Are fewer students enrolling in UC- and CSU-eligible courses in schools with higher concentrations of low-income students because the courses are not offered, because students are not encouraged to enroll, or because students do not feel prepared to take these courses?

The answers to such questions will come not from the datasets analyzed here but from conversations with school, district, county, and state practitioners who know the realities

of the education system. Through discussions with superintendents and other instructional leaders in the state, the underlying reasons behind these unequal distributions might be uncovered, providing local and state policy-makers with the information they need to

begin to make changes. Teaching and learning resources can, ultimately, be more equally distributed—the next challenge is to figure out how.

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